

# HORTULANUS

Official Publication of Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc.

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**MEETINGS COMMENCE AT 7.30PM  
ST IVES COMMUNITY HALL, MEMORIAL AVE, ST IVES**

## COMING EVENTS

**No events, including KHS meetings, for the foreseeable future due to the Coronavirus situation. However, at the time of writing, the Sydney Royal Botanic Garden, Mt Tomah and Mt Annan Botanic Gardens and some selected gardens such as Mayfield, Boongala Native Garden in Kenthurst, Wildwood in Bilpin and Gory'u Japanese Garden in Little Hartley are open. Check before going**

Maureene and Keith Smith have advised that their Huge Plant Sale in aid of the National Breast Cancer Foundation will go ahead but it is now by appointment only. This means the number of people at any one time can be restricted so that everyone can socially distance. It will also be in the back garden at 45 Parklands Avenue Lane Cove North.. Appointments are available every day from 09.00 to 13.00 commencing 4th April. Please ring 9427 3550 to make appointments. First come, first served! What's on sale can be found on [www.thepropagatinggardener.com.au](http://www.thepropagatinggardener.com.au) .

The Foundation and Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney have advised that you can view the artworks in the postponed exhibition of botanic art, Plants with a Heart, by going to [www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/whatson/plantswithaheart](http://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/whatson/plantswithaheart). They are hoping to rescheduled this event for a date in July.

Hi

It was a cool and damp evening for our March meeting but it did not stop 76 members and friends from coming along to enjoy themselves and compare notes.

Evelyn Mason opened the meeting and welcomed our two newest members, Brenda and Gary Pringle. She then introduced and welcomed a large group of visitors and hoped they would spread the message about our Society.

Evelyn then announced the retirement of Peter Fisher from the Committee and as a mark of appreciation for his services, our President, Ted Shaw, presented Peter with a beautiful pot of flowering dahlias.

Ted then gave a short talk on the progress of the various bus trips that are being organised for the coming year.

## MEMBER NEWS

As members have already been advised, both our next meeting and the Hunter Valley Gardens and the Sunshine Coast trips have been cancelled due to coronavirus concerns. Refunds for the first trip are being sent out. We will give members plenty of advice when we can recommence our meetings and we will try to reschedule both trips when it is safe to do so.

Many of you are aware that the St Ives Community Hall where we meet, is due for a complete refurbishment. Ku-ring-gai Council is endeavouring to find us another hall and we will be checking out a number of locations in the coming weeks. As we will probably not be meeting again for several months, this is not an issue at the present time. We will give members plenty of notice when a suitable new location has been secured.

In order to better keep in touch with members, KHS has set up a Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2273344029640713/about/>, where members can interact by sending in pictures and short comments on items of interest in their garden or gardens they have visited. If you are on Facebook already, go into its search engine and type in Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. Click on the request to join. The Facebook Group administrator will check our list to confirm that you are a paid up KHS member and will then add you as a member. If you are not on Facebook as yet then you will need to create a profile. It is easy. Here is a link to a simple guide: <https://www.wikihow.com/Set-up-a-Facebook-Account>. The KHS Facebook group is private to members. We look forward to seeing meeting up online.

## OUTINGS

All our outings are on hold for the time being. Refunds are being processed for the cancelled Hunter Valley Gardens trip and will be sent out shortly. You will be advised as soon as we have been able to reschedule our planned trips.

## TRADING TABLE

The four Trading Tables were full of first class plants all going for \$10 or less. Now that is a lot less than you would pay in your local garden centre. There were some lovely plants for sale including some plants you would never see in garden centres. The ladies operating the tables should be congratulated for a job well done. Don't forget, the grower gets 90% of the price the plant sells for with your Society taking a modest 10% commission. The next members' Trading Table will be at the October meeting so get propagating now and you will be sure to have some nice plants ready for the next sale. For members who sold plants at the March meeting, payment by cheque will be sent shortly.

## SHOW BENCH

The roses were very impressive considering growing conditions over the last couple of months, first the hot dry weather and water restrictions and then a long period of rain. There were some unusual exhibits in the cut flower classes including the Xanthostemon (Golden Penda) which is a member of the myrtaceae family and is native to the warmer parts of NSW and Queensland. For it to flower in Sydney, the conditions have to be just right which they obviously have been as there were two exhibits on the show bench. Also exhibited were some of the unusual seed pods of the Koelreutaria tree (also known as the Golden Rain tree for its abundant yellow flowers in spring) and the lovely flower of a ginger, *Alpinia zerumbet*. The species *Hippeastrum* looked very interesting while in the Orchid class there was a magnificent *paphiopedilum* orchid (*Paph. Parishii*) which comes from China. The Vegetable section was looking good with some beautiful squash, beetroot and cucumber (among others) on show. The Decorative section showed a lot of imagination in the lovely and colourful exhibits.

## RAFFLE

The main prizes this month were two bales of beautiful mulch, Sugar Cane and Neutrog's Who Flung Dung. There were also several plants including a very nice *Lobularia* (a perennial ground cover which is a close relative of the more common *Allysum*, an annual).

## MAIN SPEAKER March

In the absence of our scheduled speaker, Lindsay Manton, who was unable to attend due to illness, Christine Rethers took us on a journey through some of the loveliest parts of South West England. The journey started in Bath, Somerset, aptly named for its Roman baths built over two centuries and completed in 60-70 AD. The baths were based around nearby hot springs with the water piped into three different pools, one hot, one warm and the last one cold and were popular with the Romans of the day for their therapeutic value. From Bath, we moved to Kilver Court Gardens

### *Kilver Court Gardens*



near Shepton Mallet. This 3 ½ acre garden was created at the beginning of 1900's and has as a backdrop a 15m high unused Victorian viaduct. The present garden is a reproduction of the 1960's Chelsea Flower Show gold medal winning show garden and features streams, pools, a small lake and rockeries with low-growing conifers and numerous Japanese maples. To the horror of the band of Australian visitors, a Wollemi pine was wrongly attributed as having originated in NZ. Needless to say, the management was soon told otherwise.

The next place to be visited was Mottisfont Abbey built in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century with its outstanding rose garden and then on to an ultra-modern garden created by Piet Oudolf the internationally –renowned landscape designer from the Netherlands. This garden was planted with numerous grasses and herbaceous perennials and would have been in its full glory in late summer. A visit to Stourhead revealed this world-famous landscaped garden in its full splendour with its magnificent lake, classical temples, mystical grottoes and many rare and exotic trees, virtually unchanged since its creation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The trip moved next to Devon and Cornwall and a fascinating visit to the home of Agatha Christie with its famous boathouse on the River Dart, the scene of a classical Hercule Poirot murder mystery. Dartmoor revealed itself with all its rugged, wind-swept and forbidding scenery, and one could only guess what murder and skulduggery that took place there in times gone by. On the whole the gardens of Devon and Cornwall are unequalled anywhere in the UK. Because of the relatively benign climate, the range of trees and plants that can be grown there is exceptional. Many of the gardens visited belong(ed) to wealthy land-owners and no expense was spared in their creation. A number contained national plant collections of various types, for example the magnificent collection of Champion Trees in the garden of Trewithen which includes magnolias and camellias and the national collection of beautiful astilbe and Japanese iris in Marwood Hill garden.

The trip would not have been complete without a visit to Rosemoor, the RHS garden renowned for its Queen Mother's rose garden. It was pleasing to see that at the Lost Gardens of Heligan its restoration is continuing after being rediscovered in the 1990's. It contains one of the largest and oldest rhododendron the writer had ever seen. One negative of the trip was a visit to the Eden Project which the writer had visited about 10 years earlier. She found it much too over-commercialised this time and looking very tired. However, it is still a wonderful opportunity for visitors to see many interesting tropical plants including an *Amorophallus titanum* in flower.

### *Stourhead*



## MEMBER SPEAKER March

Ted Shaw started his presentation on mulch by explaining why it is so beneficial for our gardens eg. it helps to retain soil moisture, it reduces weeds, it breaks down to provide nutrients and it looks aesthetically pleasing. He showed that there are many types of mulch including home-made compost, pine bark, eucalyptus chips, lucerne hay, sugar cane, commercial products like Neutrog's WhoFlungDung and even pebbles (that can do an excellent job in the right setting). Ted explained that mulch can be applied at any time but especially at the beginning of spring before weeds have started growing. It is especially good to spread mulch after good rain when the soil is nice and moist. He suggests that it can be spread from 50 to 100mm thick, depending on the type. Just be careful not to spread it right up against the trunks of trees and shrubs, otherwise this could start them rotting. He pointed out that some people are apprehensive about spreading mulch, fearing it could be a fire hazard, encourage insects such as termites or even change the pH of the soil. Ted explained that in his experience none of these should be of concern. Ted brought along some examples of the different types of mulch he had talked about and there were two large bags of mulch in the raffle, sugar cane and WhoFlungDung, for two lucky winners.

### HUGH'S CORNER WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING IN MY GARDEN?



▶ Those beds you have planted out with spring flowering annuals should be watched closely. At this time of the year weeds can grow faster than your plants and they will soak up the fertiliser just as quickly as your annuals so get rid of them as soon as possible.

▶ A good feed of Aquasol or Thrive will help spring annuals on their way but avoid feeding camellias and azaleas for the moment. Fertilising them now will encourage foliage at the expense of buds.

▶ Go around and inspect your potted plants. Very likely you will find some that could do with repotting into a bigger pot or maybe would appreciate a fresh lot of potting mix. Now would be a good time to do it. Don't forget to turn your pots on their side and check the drainage holes. If they are blocked then push a rod or large screwdriver well up into the pot and give it a good wriggle to free up the drainage holes. No plant likes cold wet feet.

▶ Have a look at any dahlias you have growing. The foliage will have started to dry out so get rid of all those dry leaves into the compost heap together with any dead flower heads. This will encourage your plant to put out more flowers. Remember, snails love dahlias just as much as you do so lay down some snail bait. Use one based on EDTA or iron chelate not one based on metaldehyde as this is poisonous to pets and children.

▶ If you are thinking about camellias, now is the time to stop thinking and do something. Sasanqua camellias can come into bloom as early as February but their main flowering period is March to May. Go along to your local garden centre and have a look at what is on offer, you will be surprised.

▶ If you are you going to put in some tulips this year, now is the time to start negotiations for space in the refrigerator for your bulbs. Tulips need 6 weeks in a cold climate (the crisper drawer of the refrigerator) before planting out.

▶ One for the native plant growers. Be careful if you are going to buy a wattle to brighten up your garden. Check with the nurseryman as to how long you can expect it to live. Many wattles only have a short live span of 4-5 years. However, they can put on a spectacular show even if it is for a comparatively short time.

▶ Have you planted out a lot of very small seeds? If you have remembered, the smaller the seed the closer to the surface they are planted. However, it is the surface soil that dries out the quickest so watch it and keep the soil surface damp until the seeds sprout and send down roots deeper into the soil. Be careful not to flood the soil or you will wash the seeds away.

▶ Keep an eye on your indoor plants, particularly those that receive sunlight through a window. Every week or two, turn the pots a bit so that the whole plant gets its share of sunlight. If this is not done you will finish up with a lopsided plant. Keep an eye on the soil moisture, particularly if there is an air conditioner or heater in the general area.

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



**Question?** I am a first time gardener and I wish to plant a few roses. Where should I plant them?

**Answer:** Plant them where they will get at least 6 hours of sunshine a day. Black Spot and Powdery Mildew, the curse of all rose growers, flourish when roses are grown in shady places. Depending on your roses, space them about a metre

apart as this will allow good air circulation between the plants and discourage fungi and diseases. The long hours of sunlight will also encourage more flowers.

**Question?** I am in trouble with my roses because when they reach the bud stage, the buds do not open. When I examine the buds I usually find a small hole. What is going on?

**Answer:** Your buds are being attacked by the bud worm. This is a small caterpillar that burrows into the bud and

eats the inside. Spray your rose buds with Dipel. This is a safe spray and harmless to pets and children. It will stop the caterpillars eating and they will die of starvation.

**Question?** Normally my Tibouchina gives no trouble but this year a lot of the leaves have turned brown along the edges. It does not seem to be a bug or caterpillar and it does not appear to be a disease. What is it?

**Answer:** Tibouchina prefer an acid soil. Have you been scattering lime or dolomite around the area or digging in a lot of Blood and Bone? Both of these are high in calcium and will make your more soil more alkaline. Get hold of some sulphur or ammonium sulphate and dig it in. Both of these will push the pH down. They will also encourage more leaves.

**Question?** What is the advantage of dead-heading my annuals each year?

**Answer:** It is a simple task and will encourage your plants to produce more flowers.

**Question?** Something is attacking my young seedling plants. I planted a lot of young seedlings out a couple of weeks ago and now they are all lying face down on the soil. They appear to have been cut off at the soil level. What is doing this, I cannot see any insects?

**Answer:** Your young seedlings have been attacked by a soil-born disease called Pythium. It travels through the soil with water movements. Pull out all your seedlings and spray or water the soil with a fungicide called Fongarid or Furalaxyl (Yates Anti Rot) before trying any more seedlings.

**Question?** I have a nice healthy clivia growing in the shade along my side fence but it is most reluctant to flower. What can I do about it?

**Answer:** The usual reason that healthy clivias do not flower is because of a lack of phosphorus in the soil. Give it a good feed of Super Phosphate or Thrive for Flowers and Fruit.

**Question?** I was given three agapanthus a couple of years ago and planted them down along my side fence. They grew very well but have never flowered. I dug a lot of cow manure into the soil and water them regularly but still no flowers. What can I do?

**Answer:** Agapanthus are usually easy to grow but they do need lots of sunlight to flower well. It sounds like they need more sunlight. Consider moving them and in the meantime give them a good watering with Thrive for Flowers and Fruit.

**Question?** I recently fertilised one of my citrus trees with relatively fresh horse manure. I put down a thick layer and raked it well into the soil and then watered it. About a month later my citrus tree died. What went wrong?

**Answer:** Really fresh horse manure can be poisonous to shrubs and plants because it has too much ammonia and urea. In addition, it is often full of weed seeds. It is normal practice to dump fresh horse manure down the back in an out of the way place and let it age for about six months. This will get rid of any 'nasties' that can kill you plants.

**Question?** I have a nice Syzygium hedge that normally gives no trouble but this year a lot of the leaves have dimples in them and many of them are starting to crinkle. What is causing this and what can I do about it?

**Answer:** You cannot do anything about the crinkling or the dimples as the 'horse has bolted'. The insect that caused them has gone. Prune off the affected leaves and once the new leaves start to appear, spray the leaves with Confidor. Another way is to bury Confidor tablets in the ground around the roots. The roots of the hedge will take up the Confidor and make the hedge poisonous to the pest. It usually takes a few weeks for this to happen.

Regards  
Hugh

**Decorative: 'Hot Stuff' and 'Purple Patch'**



**'You have to laugh!'**

In line this morning at the Post Office, three people came in wearing masks....

**PANIC !!!**

Then they said "This is a robbery" and we all calmed down